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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000204

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: ADM OLSON DISCUSSES MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH  
SENIOR QATARIS DURING DOHA VISIT

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

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(C) KEY POINTS  
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-- The Chief of Staff (COS) of the Qatar Armed Forces (QAF) MG Hamad AL Attiyah expressed to visiting USSOCOM Commander ADM Eric Olson March 15 his satisfaction with the quality of training his forces had received and his desire that the QAF engage in more special operations activity.

-- MG Al Attiyah and Commander of Qatar's Internal Security Forces (ISF) Sheikh Abdulla bin Nasser Al Thani were open to ADM Olson's suggestion that the two countries engage in staff exchanges, visits by subject matter experts, and the possibility that Qataris could lecture at U.S. military training facilities.

-- On Iraq and Afghanistan, MG Al Attiyah said Qatar would not be able to work with the U.S. outside of Qatar "at this time," citing the ongoing reorganization of the Qatari special forces.

-- Although reluctant to discuss Iraq, MG Al Attiyah observed that Sunni elements needed to be brought back into the government to counter Al Qaida influence; he was unsure of steps other countries in the region might take if Iran seeks to expand its influence in Iraq after the U.S. withdrawal.

-- Sheikh Abdulla reported to ADM Olson that Qatar is now engaged in fighting the traffic of drugs, particularly hashish, in the Gulf.

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(C) COMMENTS  
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-- The relationship between Sheikh Abdulla and MG Al Attiyah will continue to be vital as Qatar continues to develop the means to provide security for its critical energy infrastructure and the combating of narco-trafficking.

--An overarching theme of the visit was the willingness of the QAF and ISF to participate and train with U.S. Special Forces. The positive exchange with ADM Olson has provided a foundation for future Qatar-U.S. initiatives.

End Key Points and Comments.

1.(C) Over dinner at the Ambassador's residence March 15 with Commander of Qatar's Internal Security Forces (ISF) Sheikh Abdulla bin Nasser Al Thani and the Chief of Staff (COS) of the Qatar Armed Forces (QAF) MG Hamad AL Attiyah, USSOCOM Commander ADM Eric Olson and Ambassador LeBaron reviewed past Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercises conducted

primarily with the ISF, and discussed the possibility of future JCETs with the Coast Guard (which reports to MOI) and the ISF.

12. (C) QAF/US SPECIAL FORCES EFFORTS: MG Al Attiyah expressed his desire to see the Qatar Armed Forces engage in more special operations activity. Sheikh Abdulla added that he was very pleased with quality of training that his organization has been receiving. (In a separate office call with ADM Olson and Ambassador, MG Al Attiyah spoke highly of joint training between the two countries and expressed interest in having the U.S. train Qatari cadets who will travel to Mongolia in Fall 2009. MG Al Attiyah added that he would like U.S. Special Forces officers to travel to Qatar to discuss opportunities for further training, but he recognizes that this is difficult given the demands in Iraq and Afghanistan.)

13. (C) ADM Olson suggested pursuing the possibility of small staff exchanges, subject matter expert (SME) visits, and using Qataris as lecturers at the Joint Special Operations University and other training facilities. His Qatari interlocutors said there may be value in pursuing these activities. Ambassador said Embassy Doha would follow up, in coordination with CENTCOM and SOCOM.

14. (C) QATAR ASSISTANCE ABROAD: Asked if Qatar would be willing to work with the U.S. outside of Qatar, possibly in Iraq or Afghanistan, MG Al Attiyah said quote not at this time unquote. He said this was for reasons of timing. Qatar is currently reorganizing its special forces and does not have the right type or number of people, or the right

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equipment to deploy. Although progress is being made in these areas, the COS would find it difficult to support U.S. efforts abroad in the foreseeable future.

15. (C) GHQ/MOI COOPERATION: Sheikh Abdulla and MG Al Attiyah described the strong relationship that exists between their two organizations. Al Attiyah said whenever Sheikh Abdulla is in need of personnel or equipment from the QAF, he is quick to respond. (NOTE: It was interesting to observe Sheikh Abdulla and MG Al Attiyah together. At times we have heard of on-going turf battles between their two organizations, but this was not evident on this particular evening with the Ambassador and ADM Olson. Both men arrived and departed in the same vehicle, and it was common to hear MG Al Attiyah refer to Sheikh Abdulla as quote Brother bin Nasser unquote. End note.)

16. (C) IRAQ: ADM Olson solicited MG Al Attiyah's thoughts on Iraq only to have the COS return the question to ADM Olson. ADM Olson said the real issue appears to be establishing an enduring army and system of governance. ADM Olson said he believed that Iraq would re-emerge as an economically healthy country, and he believes Iraq has entered a period where threats would come more from within its borders than outside of them.

17. (C) MG Al Attiyah offered that Iraq needs to continue to bring the Sunnis back into the government in order to drive out Al Qaida. He also spoke of how he was unsure of the Middle East's regional response to Iran if Iran expands its influence into Iraq after an American withdrawal.

18. (C) SMUGGLING EFFORTS IN THE GULF: A major concern for the Qataris, according to Sheikh Abdulla, is combating narco-trafficking efforts in the Gulf. Hashish, he said, is the most common drug found, and MG Al Attiyah added that the smugglers use a "networked effort," alluding to satellite communications techniques and high-speed boats which are difficult to track on Qatari radar.  
LeBaron